

RAFAEL MONEO

MUSEUM OF ROMAN ART in Mérida (SPAIN) 1986

The construction of the National Museum of Roman Art in Mérida coincided with the celebration of the bimillennium of the city in 1975. The Museum contains the museum the collections and the archaeological remains and ruins from the Roman city of Emerita Augusta excavated on the site where it was due to be located.

From a figurative point of view, this is, without a doubt, one of Moneo's most traditional accomplishments. In it he creates an architectural language that reformulates the past in terms of techniques, meanings and contents without forgetting the present

The architect Rafael Moneo designed two buildings which are separated by the remains of a Roman road and joined above by a solid elevated walkway. One of the buildings contains the museum and its storage rooms, and the other the restoration workshops, library, function room and offices.

The first building has a main nave and various parallel and perpendicular cross galleries, illuminated by the midday sun and with elements (arches, buttresses) inspired by the Roman architecture of Mérida. The most outstanding feature of the second building is its south façade: an arch with a lintel and a niche which forms the entrance to the museum. The door contains bronze bas-reliefs by Francisco López and the niche holds a replica of a Roman sculpture.



The South elevation: In the front on calle J. Ramón Mélida the only element of composition there is an arch, which surrounds the main access of the museum and is topped by a white marble lintel and a niche.

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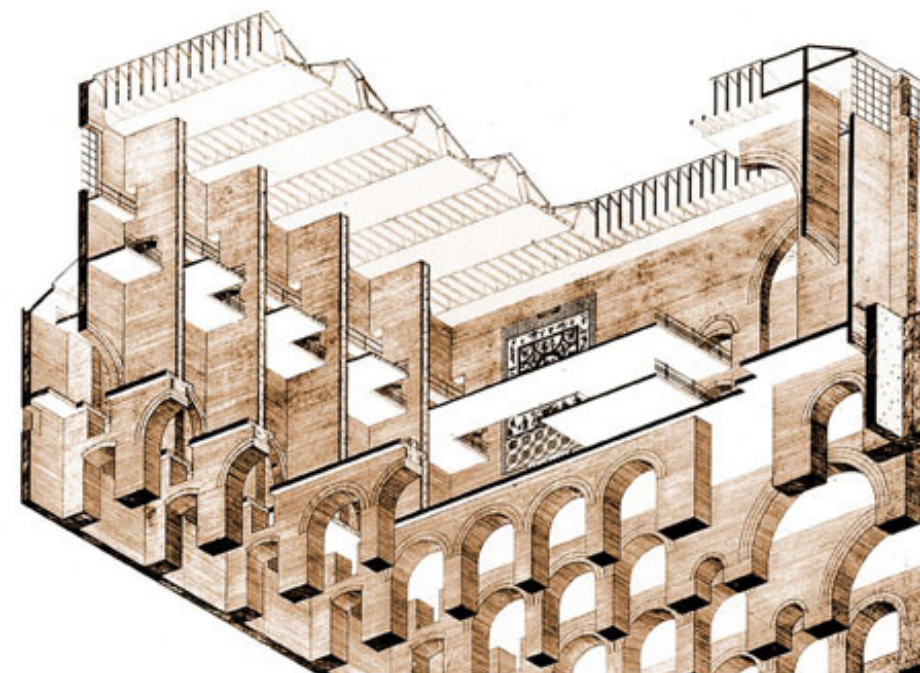
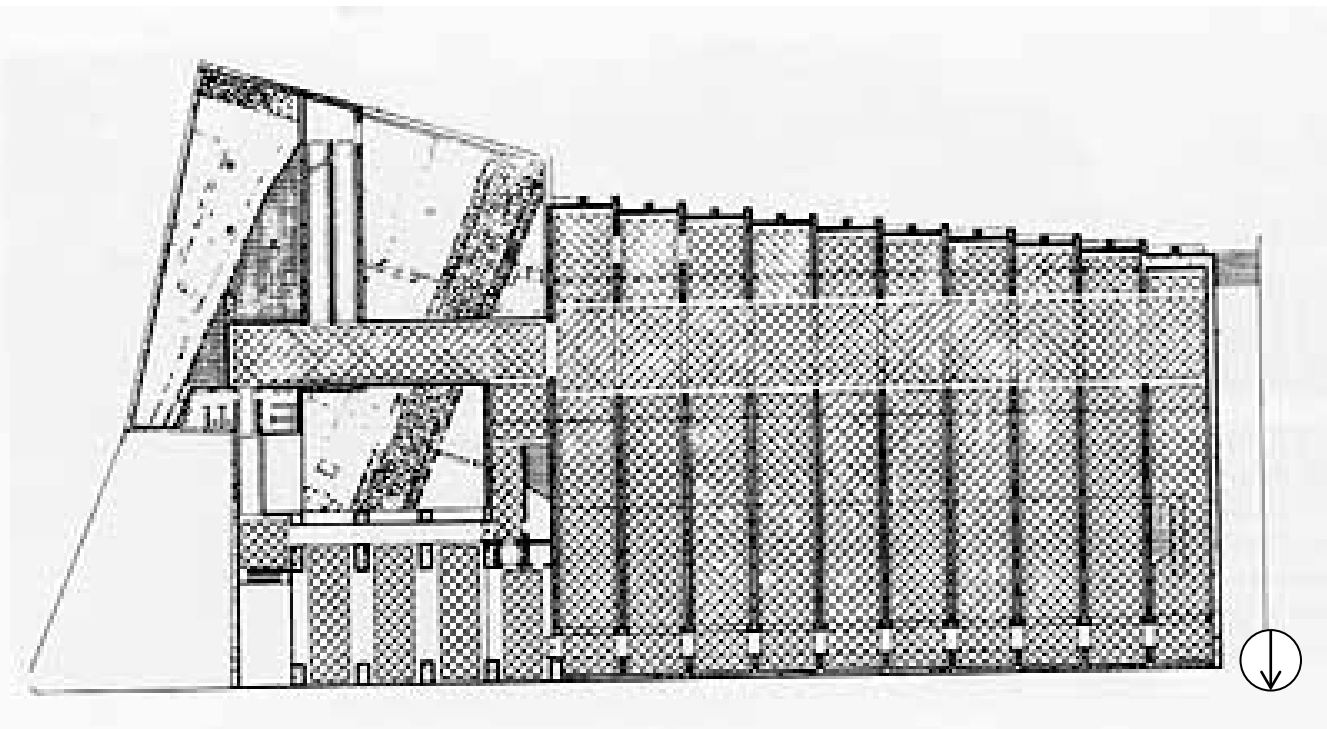
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Rup: Arch. Carmine Cefalo

From a figurative point of view, this is, without a doubt, one of Moneo's most traditional accomplishments. In it he creates an architectural language that reformulates the past in terms of techniques, meanings and contents without forgetting the present. The [general outline of the design](#) is made up of two buildings separated by the Roman road and connected by an imposing walkway, which hangs over the archaeological remains.



One of the two buildings houses the museum and its warehouses, which Moneo in the preliminary plan calls the museum-archives. The other one holds restoration workshops, the library, an auditorium and administrative offices. [The former](#) is made up of a "type" of [main nave](#) and a series of parallel bays, which run perpendicular to the main space. The central light filters through the structure of the ceilings and the illumination designed through the vertical ornaments is controlled and blended by the diaphragm walls that form the nave at the south end. The open windows at the north end guarantee direct light. The repetitive system of bays is superimposed on a lattice that makes up a hierarchy which a visitor can appreciate



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The opening of arches in the parallel walls that form the nave's space have the same geometrical relationship as the Arch of Trajan. This helps a visitor visualize the order of dimensions that prevailed in Roman Mérida. This system of parallel walls is translated onto the southern front of the building (situated on calle J. Ramón Mérida) through the use of buttresses, which call to mind the geometry and strength of the aqueduct "Los Milagros".

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In summary we could say that the spatial relations inside the museum and the significance the architectural statuary acquires are fundamental if we want to understand the meaning of this architecture. In their architecture, the Romans adapted lineal Hellenistic forms for the outsides of their buildings, whereas on the inside they created pieces that were ever richer in spatial relations. While in Hellenistic architecture voluminous spaces were left outside in relation to different buildings or to their parts, in Roman architecture these spaces were brought inside. These, I feel, were the guidelines that Moneo used for his project and not only Roman construction techniques. To enumerate the possible sources or analogies used will only help to arrive at limited goals.

Construction of the museum was finished at the end of 1985 and until its inauguration, September 19th, 1986, the installation of its collections was carried out by a team of archaeologists from Mérida, coordinated by the museum's present day Director, José María Álvarez Martínez, with the valuable help of Antonio Pintiado in the restoration of the Roman mosaics. Moneo's plans, which included everything from the design of the pedestals and display cases up to the last chair in the building, were followed. Others who worked with Moneo were the engineers, Jesús Jiménez and Alfonso García Pozuelo who helped in the calculation of the structure, the assistant architects, Francisco González Peiro and Rafael Luque who helped supervise the construction and Manuel Juan García, the head contractor. Lastly, what makes the buildings of the National Museum of Roman Art in Mérida more important is the possibility of their becoming the most important research centre of the Roman world in Spain as well as a place of meeting, communication and cultural dissemination for Extremadur

ATOCHA 1986



The Atocha Railway Station is the first to be built in Madrid. Located in the district of Prado near the centre of Madrid was inaugurated on Monday, February 9th, 1851. At that time it was named Estación de Mediodía, which is now an area within the district of Arganzuela, just south of [Parque del Retiro](#). Today the railway station is simply called, Estación de Atocha. Rafael Moneo was the man responsible for the design of the new Atocha train station terminal building. The design was largely centred around the new [high-speed AVE trains](#) that travel to places like Seville and [Barcelona](#). Madrid's Atocha train station is more reminiscent of a modern airport than of the traditional idea of a railway station. Currently, around 16 million passengers per year pass through here. Its last expansion, under Rafael Moneo, was completed on 1992, the year when Spain hosted both the Olympics in Barcelona and Seville's Universal Exhibition. In fact, such expansion was to accommodate the fabulous and brand new high-speed train infrastructure, known as AVE, which takes travelers from Madrid to Seville in under 2.5 hours.

ATOCHA 1986



Rafael Moneo decided to share distribution and function, thus the 2 railway stations (high speed, and local transport) are connected by a cylindrical building that acts as an hinge and as a lighthouse in order to manage passengers. The aim of the project is the rehabilitation of the old station called “Glorieta”, which once was a railway junction and now it is transformed in an urban heart, that is a place for gathering. Glorieta becomes the symbol of the transformation of the railway station, that before was a place dedicated to passengers and now is an open space dedicated to citizens.

ATOCHA 1986



For that reason the space that hosted tracks becomes a greenhouse, a simply amazing urban jungle, containing shops, cafés, restaurants, a sort of roofed square with continuation in the square outside. The city enters the stations in an urban continuity. In the summer months, when the dry heat of Madrid seeps through the glass roof, hundreds of tiny sprinklers let off a sort of steam, not quite water, giving the place a genuine look of outdoors jungle. This makes Atocha not simply a traveler's space, but also a haven to stop by and have a coffee, read a book, or simply enjoy the view in a very well kept tropical climate. The 4000 square meters (13,123 square feet) of green area host 7200 plants of 260 species from places like India, Australia, Asia or China among many others. Species are of two kinds, tropical and subtropical, and to make both happy and keep them in good health, temperature is kept between 22 and 24 Celsius degrees (71.6 to 75.2 Fahrenheit) and humidity between 60 and 70 percent.

ATOCHA 1986

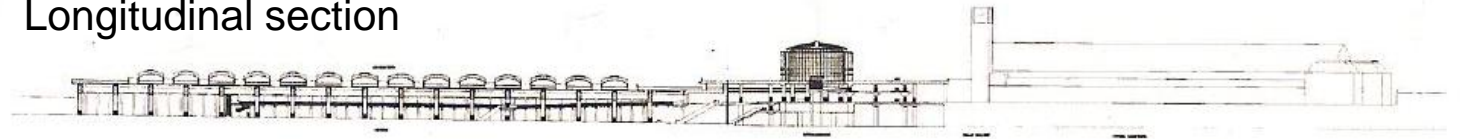


The memorial , in the picture, was inaugurated at the very site across from the round train station building on March 11 2007, the third anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

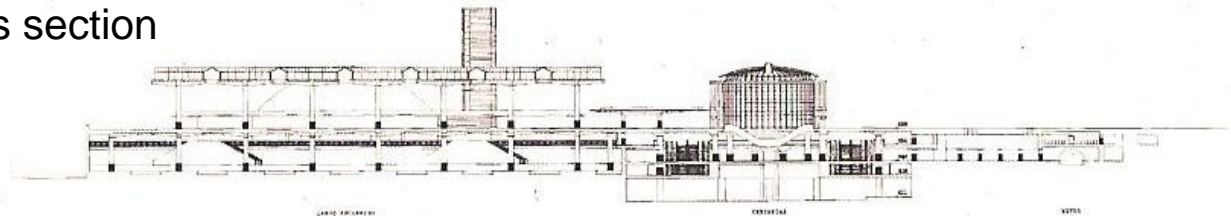
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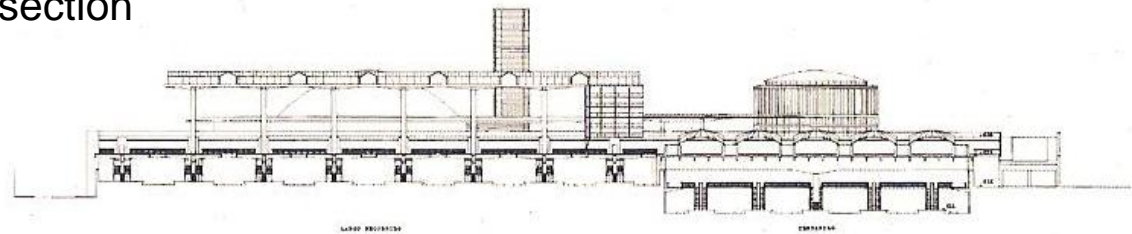
6 Longitudinal section



7 Cross section



8 Cross section



A tower with a clock on top lays beside the ancient building and it is a metaphors of time, or the relationship among architecture, past, present and future. In Moneo's opinion the meaning of this relationship is expressed by continuity, that is the goal of his architecture. "Continuity is not the reproduction of ancient styles, but continuity aims to understand the architectural culture of the site and to use an up to date design in order to answer to present human needs and to anticipate the future ones.

Moneo was born in Tudela (Navarra) in 1937. Shortly after gaining his degree in 1961, he won the National Architecture Award, together with Fernando Higueras for their work on Museum of Artistic Restoration in Madrid. He has undertaken an intense teaching focus in both Madrid and Barcelona. Rafael has likewise been guest professor at some of the most prestigious universities in the world, such as Princeton and Harvard.

AWARDS

National Architecture Award (1961)

Gold Medal for Fine Arts (1992)

Príncipe de Viana Award for Culture (1993)

Pritzker Award (1996)

Mies Van der Rohe Award (2001)

Gold Medal for Architecture (2006)

Príncipe de Asturias Award for the Arts (2012)